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BOOK REVIEWS

BHAISM AND ITS CLAIMS. SAMUEL GRAHAM WILSON, D.D. Fleming H. Revell Co. 1915. Pp. 298.

The author of this volume was for more than thirty years a missionary and principal of a school in Tabriz, where he was in close communication with Persian Bahais — his language teachers were of the sect — and where he enjoyed the acquaintance of the French consul, M. Nicolas, the biographer of the Bab and translator of the Babi Scriptures. He has also had in his possession a manuscript life of Baha Allah, by Mohammed Javad Kasvini, which does not appear, however, to have furnished much information not previously accessible to Western scholars. For the history of the movement from the Bagdad period on, Dr. Wilson has drawn chiefly from Browne; the Western stage of the development of Bahaism is set forth more fully, chiefly from American publications by Oriental and American authors. His reading in these sources has been comprehensive, and he has made profitable use of the periodical issued every nineteen days at Chicago, at first under the title *Bahai News*, subsequently as *The Star of the West*.

Two chapters are given to setting forth the claims of Bahaism. The world is in need of a new and universal religion based on divine revelation, and Bahaism is this religion. The first of the three fundamental dogmas of Bahaism is the deity of Baha Allah, who is, in his own words, "the locus of God's essence in the world of the word and the creation." The term "incarnation" (*hulūl*) is avoided, having long since been put under the ban of heresy as a doctrine of some of the extravagant Sufis; "Manifestation" is the technical term of the ultra-Shiites, and is consequently adopted by the Babis and Bahais. What is meant, however, is made clear by the words of one of the missionaries sent to America to heal the dissensions in the order: "Upon the day when God Almighty, in the form of man known as Baha Ullah, declared himself, and said, 'I am God, and there is no God but me,' the old heavens and old earth passed away; all things became new."¹

¹ "I am God, and there is no other God but me," comes from a well-known verse of one of the greatest of the Sufi poets, Bayazid, with whom it has an altogether different sense. The Bab appears to have appropriated the word for himself in a distorted meaning.

The second dogma is the absolute authority (and, for the present age, finality) of the revelation made in and by Baha Allah, and consequently the obligation of submission and unconditional obedience to his commands. These two dogmas, as Baha Allah himself says, are inseparable: "Man cannot take one, without the other." The third dogma is the exclusive authority of Abd ul-Baha as expositor and interpreter of the revelation and commandments of Baha. After the death of Abd ul-Baha, this authority will pass to a kind of supreme council, the "House of Justice," whose decisions will be infallible. Immediately after the death of Baha Allah a schism occurred over the succession, his other sons not being disposed to concede this supreme and sole authority to Abd ul-Baha (Abbas Effendi).

Of less consequence than these fundamental dogmas are the extravagant claims of Bahais concerning the originality and value of their revelations. According to some of them, Baha Allah was the first to conceive the idea of universal and permanent peace among the nations, of the harmony of religions, the equality of women with men — most of which have only that kind of originality which comes from an ignorance of the history of human thought.

The relations of Bahaism and Christianity are discussed in the two following chapters. The efforts of Bahais were early directed to proving that in Baha Allah were fulfilled, not only the expectations of the Imam Mahdi, who according to the Shia Moslems is to "fill the earth with righteousness as now it is filled with injustice," and among the extreme sects, with whom the Bahais are connected, is the latest "Manifestation" of the godhead in human form, but of the prophecies of the coming deliverer (Messiah) in the Jewish Scriptures and of the return of Christ in the New Testament. As Dr. Wilson significantly says, the missionaries had put these weapons into their hands by a Persian translation of Keith, *On Prophecy*. It must be remembered, however, that apocalyptic arithmetic had been cultivated independently and abundantly by Shia Moslems themselves, on the basis of Koran and tradition; and the calculations of the date of the appearance of the Bab in 1844, or the manifestation of Baha in 1863, based on the 2,300 days in Daniel 8 14, or the 1,290 days in Daniel 12 11, are intrinsically neither better nor worse than computations of the coming of Christ or the end of the world from the same data by similar processes.

In the syncretistic stage of Bahaism, which began at Acca, and in the missionary propaganda adapted to peoples of Christian education, there has been an extensive accommodation to the language

of Scripture and Christian phraseology, and an effort to present Bahaism as the consummation and fulfilment of Christianity. This has been accompanied by a free use of the religious principle of dissimulation, which has played so large a part in the history of Shia Mohammedanism, and has had such a mischievous effect on Persian character. The Ismailis, the Druses, the Ali Ilahis are earlier examples of sects which were all things to all men, and which allowed their adherents to profess Judaism, Christianity, or orthodox Islam — or all of them — according to circumstances, precisely as the Bahais permit or recommend their converts to be professing Christians, or to remain in the Jewish synagogue, or the Zoroastrian faith. The revelation of Baha Allah succeeded and superseded all that went before it — the Old Testament and the New, the Koran, the Beyan of the Bab — as each succeeding Manifestation is superior to his predecessors. This position resembles that of orthodox Islam toward the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

Bahaism is in its ideal and intention a state, a theocracy. Its constitution and its laws — civil, criminal, and ritual — are embodied in a book of infallible authority, in which no change can be made before the coming of the next Manifestation, which Baha Allah declared would not be for at least a thousand years. This conception of the theocratic state and its divine law are taken over without the slightest modification from Shia Mohammedanism. The organs of the theocracy in this system are the Imams. During the period of occultation, when the Imam of the Age is concealed, the world is governed for better or for worse — chiefly worse — by political rulers, but when the Imam Mahdi appears, he will claim the sovereignty and the possession of the earth by divine right. The Bab openly made this claim, and the Babi rebellions against the Shah were, in the eyes of his followers, the beginning of the holy war by which the earth should be subdued beneath the rule of the Imam. Baha Allah, more wisely, disavowed the intention or expectation of establishing the reign of righteousness on earth by the sword — the universality of the true religion is to be achieved by the conversion of the peoples of the earth; but the goal to be thus achieved is, none the less, a theocracy. The best form of the state, as it appears in Baha's writings for Western readers, at least, is a constitutional monarchy. In the fundamental revelation, it does not appear, however, what functions are left to the monarch, constitutional or otherwise. The government is in the hands of "Houses of Justice," each consisting of nine or more Bahai men. There are local councils of this kind, and above them a national council. They are to be guided in all

things by the revelation which is in their hands — a kind of Sanhedrin, we may imagine. Finally, according to Abd ul-Baha, a universal "House of Justice" shall be organized. "That which it orders shall be the truth in explaining the commands of Baha Allah, and shall be obeyed by all. All men shall be under its supervision." National disputes will be settled by this tribunal, and, "if any nation dares to refuse to abide by the decision of the international court, all the other nations must arise and put down this rebellion. . . . They must rise up and destroy it, . . . band together and exterminate it." The resemblance of this plan to some of the most recent plans for securing the peace of the world by force of arms is obvious; the difference, however, is that this supreme arbitrament lies in the hands of a religious court.

A good deal has been made, in Occidental propaganda, of the equality of men and women in Bahaism. Abd ul-Baha created some amusement in a discourse in England on the equality of the sexes by remarking that "in the animal kingdom the male and the female enjoy suffrage; in the vegetable kingdom the flowers all enjoy equal suffrage; in the human kingdom the male and the female are equal before God; divine justice demands that men and women have equal rights." If we turn, however, to the revelation itself, we find polygamy intrenched in the sacred law. The Koran allows a man four wives at once, the Kitab Akdas of Baha Allah reduces the number to two — concubines do not count. As Dr. Wilson observes, the equality here seems to be one-sided, in as much as the corresponding right to have two husbands at a time is not extended to women. Baha Allah himself left families by three women, all of whom survived him. The power of divorce rests in the hands of the man, as it does in Moslem law, with only the restriction that if a man quarrels with his wife and wants to divorce her, he shall allow a year's time to elapse for a possible reconciliation. Marriage by contract for a fixed term (*Mut'a*), which is allowed by Shia law but not in orthodox Islam, was abolished by Baha Allah. Adultery is punished by a moderate fine, which is doubled for the second offence; but it does not appear that a woman can be released from the marriage bond because of the adultery of her husband.

Some of the American female Bahais, as is not unnatural, were perplexed that, with all the equality which Abd ul-Baha talked about, women were not allowed to be members of the Houses of Justice, either local or national; but they had to be content with the mild reproof, "The maid-servants of the Merciful should not interfere with the affairs which have to do with the Board of Consultation, or House of Justice."

In the following chapters (8-11), Dr. Wilson discusses at some length the Bahai claims to moral superiority over the rest of mankind. He tells over in detail the unsavory story of the period at Adrianople and Acca, the quarrels of the brothers Subh-i-Azal and Baha Allah, the mutual accusations of poison plots, the numerous assassinations, and the contentions among the sons of Baha Allah for the headship in the community after his death. The volume closes with a sketch of Bahaism in America and its present state.

That Bahaism has done some good in Persia, where alone it has a following numerous enough to measure results upon, Dr. Wilson would probably not deny, but the millennial conditions so glowingly depicted by some American pilgrims to the East have not come under his observation. The reputation of the Bahais for truthfulness, honesty, peaceableness, charity, and sobriety is neither better nor worse than that of their Shia countrymen. In the recent movements for political and social reform, which had so pathetic an outcome, the Bahais were not the leaders; by instruction, they prudently stood aloof. And, in fact, it would be a good deal easier for the Mullahs of the Persian state religion to accommodate themselves to liberal institutions than for those who have a brand new and unchangeable law-book on their hands.

Toward the Bahai missions in Europe and America, Dr. Wilson feels as a long-time Christian missionary in Persia might be expected to feel, and he would probably regard it as "Taḳīyya" (religious dissimulation) to disguise his sentiments, but his antipathy does not betray him into misrepresentation of the facts, for which, indeed, he quotes the authorities most approved among the Bahais, in their own words. The reader will therefore find in this volume an unsympathetic, but, so far as it goes, a trustworthy account of the movement.

The chief defect of the book is that it does not explain the origin of the religion, with what to the uninitiated reader might seem to be its distinctive or original ideas. How, for example, did Baha Allah take it into his head that he was God manifest in the flesh? And how did he find so many men prepared to take him at his word? How did the idea of the universality of the religion arise? The answer to such questions lies in the history of Shia Mohammedanism, with its doctrine of the infallible Imam, the Imam Mahdi, who is to come and establish the universal reign of truth and righteousness on earth, and the belief of the ultra-Shia sects that this Imam Mahdi is a Manifestation of the eternal godhead in human form. From the same source comes the doctrine of successive Manifestations, each

more complete than its predecessors, each with its fuller revelation of the Truth, and of the necessity of an authoritative personal guide. Bahaism is intelligible from its own premises, and entitled to the respect which every great and coherent system of religious thought commands. Men brought up in these ideas and beliefs were pre-disposed to recognize, first in the Bab and then in Baha Allah, the fulfilment of immemorial hopes and expectations, which are, in their way, parallel to the Messianic beliefs of Jews and Christians, and to the expectation of the Mahdi in orthodox Islam; and as in these religions, the expectation has produced its fulfilment. The nearest analogies to Bahaism, however, are to be found in the Ismailis and the Druses. Bahaism is not essentially a new religion, except in the sense that it recognizes the Manifestation in a different individual.

The student of the Bahai movement will also recognize in it an increasingly potent Sufi strain. Sufi influence is evident in the Bab himself. It was strong in Subh-i-Azal, the younger brother of Baha, whom the Bab named as his successor, and it appears in all the Oriental representatives of Bahaism in larger or smaller measure; it sometimes goes to the length, as I have pointed out above, of the appropriation of famous passages of the Persian mystical poets.

It is to be regretted, also, that Dr. Wilson did not make larger use of the most important of all the Bahai Scriptures, the *Kitab Akdas*, the "Most Holy Book," which, with the *Responso* appended to it, is the fundamental religious law of the Oriental Bahais. He has quoted occasionally from a summary of this work by Browne in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and has looked into a manuscript translation of it by Kheirallah, but apparently is not aware that the work has been printed and is accessible to Orientalists. On page 38 f., he quotes from the opening sentences of the *Kitab Akdas*:¹ "Whoever lays hold of him, lays hold of all good, and he who denies is lost, even though he bring all good works." The essential dogmatism and legalism of the religion are here most unqualifiedly avowed.

Although Dr. Wilson does not bring out this character in as strong relief as he might have done, he fully recognizes it, as no one in the least acquainted with the history or the texts could fail to do; and

¹ There is no indication of the source of this translation; but by the omission of the most significant clauses, and by a translation which takes the pith out of the trenchant sentences, the high claims of Baha Allah are reduced to being the dawning place of the revelation — which to Occidental ears sounds harmless enough — and the teeth of the dogma that there is no salvation except by belief in him and obedience to him are drawn.

the book will therefore serve as a wholesome corrective to such misconceptions as those into which Mr. Vail has fallen in his article on Bahaism in this REVIEW (July, 1914). Bahaism is a religion—an Oriental religion—of a perfectly well-known type, and has a right to demand that it shall be appreciated and treated as such, and not as a farrago of platitudinous oracles on elementary morals, or the shreds and patches of Persian mysticism.

Dr. Wilson would have been well-advised to have the proof read by some one more familiar with the fashions of transliterating Arabic and Persian words in English. "Madh Ulya" (repeatedly) is perhaps an awkward misprint, but "*Akstag fur Allah!* God forbid!" (p. 188) is a good deal to make the compositor the scapegoat for. It takes some imagination to recognize old acquaintances in the list of would-be founders of religions on page 19. There are some other slips: Montanus (p. 12) is in strange company with Manes and Mazdak. The quotation (p. 89), "I was a hid treasure, I desired to be known, therefore I created the world," is not from the Koran; it is one of the innumerable spurious "traditions of the Prophet" by which the Sufis gave semblance of authority to their speculations. These are minor matters; in essential things the book seems to be accurate enough.

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THE HEART OF JAINISM. MRS. SINCLAIR STEVENSON. Oxford University Press. 1915. Pp. xxiv. 336. 7s. 6d.

It is a rather surprising fact that an age so full of interest in every kind of religion and at the same time so well equipped with competent investigators as is ours, should have paid but scant attention to one of the oldest religions of the world, and one which in many points is quite unique. This Western lack of interest in Jainism is due in part to the fact that until thirty years ago it was considered merely an offshoot of Buddhism, in part to the inaccessibility of much of its ancient literature, and in part perhaps to the bad name given it by Professor Hopkins in his very influential book, *The Religions of India*; in which he caricatures Jainism as "a religion in which the chief points insisted on are that one should deny God, worship man, and nourish vermin." In the latter part of the last century, however, the attention of a few scholars began to turn toward Jainism, and Professors Jacobi and Bühler in particular made a beginning toward emancipating it at the same time from Buddhism and from